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SUBJECT: STAFFDEL BRUDER VISIT TO MOSCOW

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Senate Staff Delegation Bruder visited Moscow August 31-September 4 to seek ways to sustain momentum in the U.S.-Russian relationship after the successful July 2009 Presidential meeting in Moscow. While Federation Council Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Margelov suggested rebuilding U.S.-Russia trust levels via joint projects in Somalia, Sudan, or the Congo, the MFA urged the U.S. to form an interparliamentary group as an umbrella for activities at lower levels, and said Russia would welcome the joint development of President Medvedev's proposed European Security Architecture. U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation representatives highlighted successful joint programs with Russia, including the establishment of Research Education Centers and Technology Transfer Offices at Russian universities. Analysts proposed that Russian Muslims should seek closer ties with the West than with the Middle East, but did not think that Chinese migration to the Russian Far East posed a threat to Russia. End summary.

Federation Council

¶2. (SBU) During their August 31-September 4 visit to Moscow, Staffdel Bruder (Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff Member Jason Bruder and Senator Shaheen's Legal Assistant Chad Kreikemeier) met with Federation Council Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Margelov, who urged the U.S. and Russia to work together in areas that were not in "either's backyard." He noted that Russia was still in the process of nation building and therefore sought friendly relations with neighboring countries in order to concentrate on domestic issues. Russia today was not a "new USSR" that wanted to impose its will on independent states or buy influence in foreign countries by selling cheap oil and gas, he added. Claiming that a unipolar or multipolar world did not work, Margelov said that the U.S. and Russia instead needed to adopt a pragmatic, strategic orientation towards each other and global politics. Noting that the U.S. and Russia shared the same goals of a stable, functioning and predictable African continent, Margelov suggested finding pilot projects in Somalia, Sudan, or the Congo, in which the U.S. and Russia could work together. As the Russian President's Special Envoy to Sudan, Margelov lauded the "200 percent" understanding he shared with U.S. Envoy Gration on the issues in Sudan, and proposed a joint U.S.-Russia resolution on Sudan. On other issues, Margelov revealed that Russian and Georgian officials still meet in Moscow at prayer breakfasts, one of which he had attended that morning, and claimed that both Russia and Turkey could play a roll in solving the Iran nuclear problem. Margelov closed by restating his open invitation to Senator Kerry to visit Moscow.

MFA

¶3. (SBU) At the MFA, Staffdel met with representatives from the North America Department, the Department of European Cooperation, and the IVth CIS Department. North America Department Section Head

Alexey Korzhuev indicated Russia's strong desire to refresh the interparliamentary connections that previously existed, giving as an example Senator Bill Nelson's unexplained cancelation of his yearly meeting with Margelov. Korzhuev explained that the GOR needed formality in contacts in order to arrange meetings and visits. As such, an interparliamentary group could act as an umbrella for propelling activities at lower levels. However, the MFA was unsure about how to move forward in cooperation with the U.S. Congress.

14. (SBU) Deputy Director of the European Cooperation Department Saltanovskiy agreed that more confidence building measures between the U.S. and Russia were needed, and said Russia would welcome the joint development of President Medvedev's proposed European Security Architecture. Saltanovskiy also discussed ways that the NATO-Russia Council could be more effective.

15. (SBU) IVth CIS Deputy Director Alexey Dvinyanin stressed that the issue of restoring Georgia's territorial integrity was moot. Russia had no plans to absorb South Ossetia, and would defend Russian citizens abroad.

U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation

16. (U) U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) representatives told Staffdel the Russian government was striving to make science more competitive, by basing government funding on outputs, such as publications, rather than prior years' budgets. Russian scientists continued to have difficulty publishing their research without Western co-authors. Brain drain and aging of the scientific community were problems, despite government programs to attract and retain scientists. CRDF staff did not believe recent budget cuts in science funding would adversely affect President Medvedev's innovation priorities, citing as an example continued GOR support for Rusnano, a state corporation which partners with private investors to commercialize nanotechnology products. CRDF praised a new law allowing universities and institutes to commercialize the results of their R&D programs. Some of CRDF's successful joint programs in Russia included the establishment of 20 Research Education Centers (RECs) and eight Technology Transfer Offices at Russian universities -- a model which the Russian government hopes to replicate by creating 450 additional RECs in the next three years -- and the Lake El'gygytgyn drilling project that will provide new insights into the climate evolution of the Arctic.

Analysts

17. (SBU) Aleksey Malashenko, a recognized expert on religion and society at the Carnegie Center's Moscow office, claimed that radical Islamism was a normal tendency, not a deviation from true Islam. Islamic jihadism was always a reaction against something, for example, against the failure of reforms in Iran. Malashenko did not believe Islam was compatible in society with Western values, but speculated that an evolution in Islam would be driven by contact with the West, and not arise from Islam itself. Therefore, Russian Muslims should seek closer ties with the West than with the Middle East. However, Malashenko contended that imposing European-style democracy on Islam would result in more Hamas-like organizations.

18. (U) Dr. Gontmakher of the Institute for Contemporary Development told Staffdel that the proportion of the population that fit the Institute's rather restrictive definition of "middle class" had stagnated since 2000 at 10 percent. He said that of the approximately 500 "mono-cities" (cities that depend on one company and massive subsidies) in Russia, 80-100 were in dire straits, while 10-30 should be completely shut down and the inhabitants relocated. Gontmakher did not share the belief that Chinese migration to the Russian Far East posed a threat. He noted that the migrants were seasonal and did not want to permanently reside in that "inhospitable region," while demographic pressures in China would abate in the coming decades. Aside from illegal logging to feed Chinese demand, Gontmakher noted that an intergovernmental agreement with the government of North Korea allowed the clear-cutting of 40,000 hectares of forest in the Russian Far East.

